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ABSTRACT

This document is the second of a series of four reports developed to provide a comprehensive overview of parent involvement, encompassing the family, parenting needs, and existing resources, in addition to current parent education approaches and practices. This "Family Academy Model" provides one interpretation of how the family functions as educator. The report begins by revealing the dramatic changes that have taken place in American families during the past twenty years, based on the impact of lower birth rates, more women in the work force, higher divorce rates, postponement of marriage, and a changing economic climate. Chapter 2 discusses five alternative family forms--single-parent, reconstituted, non-kin, multigenerational, and retirement--and their implications for educators. In chapter 3, the family life cycle is examined through the traditional nuclear family. Contributions to understanding how the family educates are highlighted in chapter 4, which includes some thoughts on the family's curriculum content. In chapter 5, the family academy concept is presented with a description of its four primary learning tasks--role selection, personality acquisition, value formation, and behavioral patterning. The five-step learning sequence of the family academy is the focal point of chapter 6 and is applied to the development of life skills through four critical life events. Chapter 7 concludes with a discussion of the future of the family. (KC)

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GUIDE TO PARENT INVOLVEMENT:

PARENTS AS ADULT LEARNERS

The Family Academy Model

of

the Family as Educator

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September, 1980

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Preface

In order to provide a comprehensive overview of parent involvement, a series of four documents has been developed encompassing the family, parenting needs, and existing resources, in addition to current parent education approaches and practices. While each document represents a unique aspect of parent involvement, all fall under the rubric of a Guide to Parent Involvement: Parents as Adult Learners. The documents within this series are:

- .Overview of Parent Involvement Programs and Practices
- .The Family Academy Model of the Family as Educator
- .Parent Participation Profile
- .Annotated Bibliography on the Family

Represented within these documents is an analysis of parent involvement programs which includes child-rearing practices; an interpretation of how the family functions as educator; a needs assessment instrument that addresses how parents perceive their input and participation; and an extensive review of literature related to the family and parent education.

Parent involvement, which encompasses parenting and parent education, is by no means a new phenomena. However, only within the past two decades has impetus mounted for program expansion. Even so, the plethora of parenting programs that have emerged have not been adequately addressed by the education community. Within the context of training, parent educators are, for the most part, self-made. Furthermore, while parent educators tend to view parents as educators of their children, the adult learning aspects of parenthood are unaddressed.

The Guide to Parent Involvement: Parents as Adult Learners is intended (1) to contribute to the information gap relating to parent involvement, especially regarding the training needs of parents; (2) to present the family as a valuable resource in the training process; and (3) to provide educators working with parents with additional tools for enhancing program development and practices. Within the framework of the Guide, we also have sought to respond to the following questions.

- How can early childhood education concepts and methods be applied to adult learning?
- What is the impact of family life and work life on the adult learning process?
- How is the interaction between adults and children part of the adult learning process?

Heartfelt appreciation for their good humor, team spirit, tireless determination, and skillful work in producing successive versions of this document goes to Marjorie Lambert, office manager, who kept it (and us as well) all together, and to Jeanetta Bruce and Terry Raffelt, research secretaries, for their indomitable spirit and their tenacious perseverance to complete the task at hand.

Winifred I. Warnat
September, 1980

Introduction

The acknowledgement that the family is our primary education institution is crucial to cultivating effective parent involvement and enhancing parent participation in the process. Within the framework of the family, regardless of its structure, each of us is both an educator and a learner throughout our entire lifetime. Given the limitations of existing interpretations of the family, it comes as no surprise that our knowledge base in this area is so badly wanting. It is the intent of The Family Academy Model of the Family As Educator to provide one interpretation of how the family functions as educator, and thereby contribute to furthering our understanding of the family as a resource and to relate that interpretation to parent involvement approaches and practices. Directed toward those educators who are designing and conducting programs involving parents, this document introduces a new and thought-provoking way of looking at the family and points out what should be considered in developing programs that truly take into account the needs and talents of the parents involved.

The Family Academy Model of the Family As Educator begins by revealing the dramatic changes that have taken place in American families during the past twenty years, based on the impact of lower birth rates, more women in the work force, higher divorce rates, postponement of marriage, and a changing economic climate. Chapter Two discusses five alternative family forms--single-parent, reconstituted, non-kin, multigenerational, and retirement--and their implications for educators. In Chapter Three the family life cycle is examined through the traditional nuclear family. Contributions to understanding how the family educates are highlighted in Chapter Four, which includes some thoughts on the family's curriculum content. In Chapter Five, the family academy concept is presented with a description of its four primary learning tasks--role selection, personality acquisition, value formation, and behavioral patterning. The five-step learning sequence of the family academy is the focal point of Chapter Six and is applied to the development of life skills through four critical life events. Chapter Seven concludes with a discussion of the future of the family concerning

policy, practice, and research, with special emphasis on implications for educators.

The Family Academy Model of the Family As Educator is a compilation of writings by Winifred Warnat. Each chapter emanates from her research and theory building efforts, and is based on scholarly papers that she has presented to numerous professional organizations. In that regard, some of the organizations she has addressed include the American Association for the Advancement of Science, the Competency-Based Adult Education Conference, and the Lifelong Learning Research Conference.

THE FAMILY ACADEMY MODEL OF

THE FAMILY AS EDUCATOR

I

Changing American Families

In a New York Times editorial by Colin Greer, it was pointed out that the debate on the family is as strong and as lively as ever.[1] According to Greer, the debate falls into two camps--(1) the many people who are worried about the family and (2) the many others who are worried about those who worry about the family. He goes on to present five, different positions being taken on the family. They include:

1. The family is decaying--the traditional nuclear family is falling apart, a sure sign of impending disaster
2. The family is evolving--it continues to develop in order to keep up with the times
3. The family is not changing much at all--the crisis being faced by the family is seen as simply a form of inter-generational conflict
4. There are changes in the family--it is udergoing a natural process, as society changes so, too, does the family change
5. The family is in retreat--it is an oppressive force fighting the power of the human potential movement, and being beaten back by the positive and progressive forces freed in our emerging post-industrial society.

Three current trends--postponement of marriage, lower birth rates, and increasing numbers of women in the work force--are considered to be major contributors to changes in American families. Each of these trends is likely to be buoyed even further during this period of what is turning out to be one of prolonged and increased economic austerity. Futhermore, people are healthier and are living longer. In keeping with those trends and reinforced by them as well, alternative family styles have surfaced and are beginning to burgeon.

Unfortunately, research on these variant forms of family is sadly lacking. For the most part, research has been interpreting them as ailing, and adversely comparing them to the traditional nuclear family. In reality, we know that these new forms of family may indeed be more complex and more difficult to manage, but we do not know that they are weaker or worse structures than that to which they are being compared.

Why are these alternative forms of family increasing? Primarily because they are adaptations of traditional family structures responding to our increasingly complex society--a society that places greater and greater demands on the individual. Because of their interactive nature, these contemporary families are now called upon to provide the individual with special communication and socialization skills beyond the scope of the traditional nuclear family.

Status of the American Family

To get some sense of what has been happening to the American family, Paul Glick, Census Bureau expert, presented the following statistics in his 1979 report, The Future of the American Family.[2] He pointed out that

- 77 percent of American families are nuclear with 16 percent of that 77 percent made up of remarried families;
- 10 percent are single-parent households, usually headed by women;
- 10 percent are made up of persons living alone;
- 1 percent is made up of heterosexual, unmarried couples; and
- 2 percent are in other kinds of living arrangements.

In other words, approximately 61 percent of American families today represent the traditional nuclear form, while 39 percent represent alternative forms of family. Glick's report also revealed that

- one divorce occurs for every two marriages
- the divorce rate has doubled between 1965 and 1975
- the average number of children per family dropped from the peak of 3.7 in 1957 to the current 1.8 per family
- since 1960, there has been a 100 percent increase in single-parent families

- one of every two children under the age of 18 has a working mother
- one out of three school-age children lives in a home headed by only one parent
- more than one half of all mothers with school-age children works outside of the home
- the number of households headed by women has increased by more than one third in this decade
- finally, 45 percent of American infants born last year will live part of their lives before they reach the age of 18, with only one parent.[3]

In its May 15, 1978 issue, Newsweek magazine presented a a special report, "Saving the American Family".[4] Where marriage probabilities are concerned, the report stated that of all adults in the United States

- 96 percent will marry;
- 38 percent of those will divorce;
- 79 percent of those will remarry; and
- 74 percent of those will divorce again.

In the same report, University of Massachusetts, sociologist, Alice Rossi stated,

> What was defined a decade ago as 'deviant,' is today labeled 'variant' in order to suggest that there is a healthy, experimental quality to current social explorations 'beyond monogamy' or 'beyond the nuclear family'.[5]

The September 1, 1978 issue of Family Circle magazine contained a special report, "What's Happening to Marriage and the Family in America?".[6] It pointed out that

- one out of six families no longer has both a husband and a wife
- nearly half of all American families have no children under 18 years of age
- in only one-third of husband-wife families is the husband the sole wage earner
- one marriage in four involves a man who has been divorced, and even more include a woman who has been divorced
- the divorce rate is distinctly higher at the low-income level

- women who work and can make their way financially are three times more likely to become divorced.

The report also identified four areas of significant change between spouses in marriage and family today, namely (1) increased egalitarianism, (2) more role sharing, (3) greater sexual freedom, and (4) more opportunity for personal growth.

Status of Mature Families

Concerning the status of mature families today, in particular the aging population over age 65, a 1979 census bureau report by Jacob Siegel revealed that from 1950 to 1976 the following changes occurred.[7]

- For people over 65 years of age, there was an 85 percent increase, with men increasing 60 percent and women increasing 108 percent.
- In the 65 to 74 age group, there was a 67 percent increase, with men increasing 51 percent and women increasing 82 percent.
- In the 75 to 84 age group, there was a 104 percent increase, with a 69 percent increase in men and a 135 percent increase in women.
- Finally, in the 85 and over age group, there was a 233 percent increase, men increasing by 159 percent and women increasing by 285 percent.

Of those age groups, from now until the year 2000, the largest growth is expected to occur in the 85 and over age group.

During October, 1979, the Wall Street Journal ran a series of articles on aging Americans. In the first article of that series, it was pointed out that in the past decade[8]

- the death rate of people over 65 years of age fell 14 percent; and
- death for heart disease in those over age 85 fell 24 percent, for stroke 33 percent, and for influenza and pneumonia 37 percent.

Only 5 percent of those over 65 years of age are institutionalized, and the average age of entry is 82 years and 5 months. The article also revealed that between 1970 and 1976, surburban households headed by

someone over age 65 rose 31 percent. It was projected that from 1979 to 1995, there will be an increase in those independent households from 15.2 million today to 21.5 million by 1995. Also, the number of women in that age group living alone, will increase from a current 5.5 million to 8.7 million by 1995.

Using Census Bureau data, Charles Mindel points out that while no more than 5 percent of older people live in institutions, ultimately 25 percent will do so before they die.[9] Of the 95 percent not in institutions, most live either by themselves or with their spouses. In addition, currently more than twice as many men over 65 are married than are women in that age group. Two and a half times as many women over 65 live alone as do men of that age. More specifically, as of 1975, of the men and women over age 65

- 14.2 percent of the men were living alone to 36 percent of the women;
- 74 percent of the men were living with their spouses, as opposed to only 35.6 percent of the women who were doing so; and
- 7.4 percent of the men were living with someone other than a spouse to the 22.8 percent of the women in that age group who were doing so.

Only a small number lived in multigenerational families.

In the same article, Mindel discussed the single elderly.[10] According to him, in 1977, 15 percent of the population over age 65 were single and living in families, of that 15 percent, 9 percent were dependent, not heading their own household. Since the early 1960's, 16 percent of the women aged 65 to 74 head their own households. For women living with kin, there has been a downward trend from 35 percent in 1950, to 11.8 percent in 1977. In 1950, almost 45 percent of single women over 75 years of age lived with their relatives; by 1977 only 25 percent did so. The decline in overall numbers of multigenerational households reflects a greater tendency for widows age 65 and over to live by themselves, and the equal tendency of their widower counterparts to remain single or remarry and maintain themselves as heads of their own households.

What the Changes Mean

This overview clearly reveals, that the American family is not on the demise, although it is dramatically changing. On the basis of the data presented, the assumption can be made that the family is evolving and working to adjust to our rapidly changing and complex society. As is characteristic of American families in general, mature families, too, are diverse, changing, and evolving. Another assumption that can be made is that the new and modified forms of family that are emerging are more complex than that of the traditional nuclear family, entailing intricate configurations and interactions with family members and social institutions outside of the family milieu. A third assumption that can be made is that while the family has been examined in terms of structure, economics, living accommodations, mental health, and marital status, data pertinent to the educating aspects of the family as a whole is virtually non-existent.

II

Varieties of American Families

In addressing the diversity that exists in American families today, Joseph Featherstone in his essay, "Family Matters," reveals how some of the current trends affecting the family are influencing its form and function. He points out

> ....Evidence of disintegration is matched by data suggesting that families are merely shifting form and function as they adapt to change....A divorce rate approaching 40 percent seems a sign of instability, yet the fact is that divorced men and women are remarrying....the steady decline in the birth rate shows that child rearing is in fact becoming more optional; yet perhaps what many people want is small families, not no families at all....[11]

He goes on to say that

> ....many things once taken for granted are now becoming matters of conscious choice. Marriage is voluntary; so, for a growing number of people, is the decision to have children. For more and more women, so is the decision to work.... many people are choosing to stay married, to raise children, and to allocate the division of family labor in traditional ways....The moralizing ideal of family life--husband, wife and the alloted number of children all content with the traditional roles--has in fact never done justice to the variety of family styles in America.[12]

As an adult, each of us has held membership in a variety of family structures, and has played a range of roles within them. Using the evolution of the contemporary family over the life span as an example, we can note the variations in family form and membership that occurs. Most of us were probably children in a traditional nuclear family; as a single young adult living away from home, a member of a no-kin family; when married with our husband or wife working along with us, a spouse in a dual career family; if divorced

and living with our children, a single parent in a single-parent family; to becoming a grandparent in an extended family; a spouse in a two-person retirement family; and finally, a widow or widower in a multigenerational family living with our children, or in an institution with our aging peers, or by ourselves, again in a no-kin family.

The family is the first social group that we belong to. Therefore, it quite naturally establishes itself as our primary socializing and educating agent, and remains so, even though its configuration and our affiliation change dramatically throughout our lifetime. It is also the basic contributor to our initial sense of justice, ethics, and responsibility in the context of society. In order to get a sense of the diversity in American family forms and functions, five variations are presented--the single parent family, the reconstituted family, the no-kin family, the multigenerational family, and the retirement family.

The Single-Parent Family

The single-parent family focuses mainly upon two populations--unwed mothers, and separated or divorced parents whose children are living with them and who have not remarried. In that capacity, these single parents serve as breadwinners, as well as attempt to satisfy both roles of mother and father. Even though a difficult form of family because of the amount of responsibility placed on one parent and the absence of the other parent, it is the most rapidly growing alternative family. Furthermore, it will continue to burgeon as our adult years continue to lengthen and we seek to change partners, and this form becomes accepted as a healthy representative of the family norm that facilitates adaptation to change. The single-parent family structure has been a major force in bringing to light the inequities of the traditional parent roles in raising children, and the crucial need for quality child care services. Attitudes and reactions toward the single-parent family will continue to undergo major change, especially in the formal education arena where an increasing number of educators

will either come from single-parent families or be the head of one themselves.

The Reconstituted Family

The basis for the reconstituted family is the remarriage of one or both mates, with one spouse bringing at least one child from a previous marriage into this new family arrangement. By the current standards of society, this one is probably the most acceptable form of alternative families. Although it is the most complex with its intricate family relationships between parent and child, stepparents and stepchildren. The reconstituted form of family will also continue to grow for essentially the same reasons as those of the single-parent family. Not improbable is the expansion of its serial monogamy aspects to the extent that it will not be considered unusual for a person to be married three and even four times over a life time. Because of the intricacies of reconstituted families where member roles and responsibilities require special adjustments, educators will be compelled to redefine traditional interpretations of family life in order to accommodate the variations in family role expectations. This will also influence how students are prepared for marriage and parenting by our formal education institutions.

The No-Kin Family

The no-kin family is the surrogate family of the single person who lives apart from his or her kindred family, and who establishes family-like relationships with friends, whether in the workplace or in the social arena. Bound together by mutual caring, no-kin family members reinforce our universal need to affiliate with others on an intimate, familial basis in a framework that simulates that of traditional family life. Two factors that contribute significantly to the formation of a no-kin family are postponement of marriage at one end of the adult continuum, and widowhood at the other end. We have much to learn from this form of family which may provide us with the greatest opportunity to determine those factors that contribute to or deter us

from functioning as self-reliant individuals in society.

The Mature Non-Kin Family. The mature non-kin family is a further variation, usually taking form upon death of a spouse. This alternative family also operates outside of the kindred family. There are at least three versions of the mature non-kin family, that include: (1) those who live independently, by themselves, (2) those who live independently, but with someone other than a spouse, and (3) those who live dependently in institutions, cared for by others.

Given the increasing divorce rate and economic constraints facing us, more and more single elderly will exist and function in independent households of some kind. Indeed, it will become increasingly imperative for the single person over age 65 to adjust to living alone and remain able to maintain an adequate livelihood. Here, too, the complexity of the no-kin family serves to stimulate individual learning capacities. As we develop new ways to function within our society that entails pursuing alternative and viable means of social and economic support, the learning process is the vehicle we use to adapt as a member of a no-kin family.

The Multigenerational Family

The multigenerational family consists of three or more generations sharing a common household and is typically considered as a living arrangement cultivated in response to the needs of an elderly family member. Usually, it takes form when married children with children of their own live with their parents, or when a widowed or disabled parent lives with his or her children and grandchildren. Directed toward the elderly family member, gross misconceptions exist concerning the prevalence of multigenerational families, with only 8 percent of the elderly consistently living in this kind of arrangement since the turn of the century. The tendency over the past thirty-five years has been for the "old-old" (those over age 75) and elderly women to live in multigenerational families. However, as our population continues to become healthier and live longer, a gradual decline in this form of family has been noted.[13] This trend may be reversed as the increase in

economic limitations and the rise of single-parent families force grown children back into their parents' home. The multigenerational family is a learning laboratory that highlights individual differences and change over the life span related to aging, life experience, and family membership. More than any other form of family, it focuses on generational differences and adjustments. This has particular relevance for a nation where the prevalence of four living generations of a kindred family will become increasingly common as our longevity continues to be extended.

The Retirement Family

Traditionally, the retirement family begins to take form when the primary head of the household retires from his or her life career. Even though this still constitutes the dominant form of retirement family today, this traditional form of mature family will change, as dual career couples (that is, most of us) with shared responsiblity as heads of household continue to increase and reach maturity. This change will influence the economic base of the retirement family, as well as the desirability and the preparedness of the person who retires to remain at home without some sort of employment. A significant factor affecting the retirement family is the adjustment that is necessary when both spouses are no longer working, and are facing an infinite amount of time with each other. Given the dramatic changes in life roles, available free time, and personal economy, a trememdous amount of individual learning occurs in the process of adapting to this alternative family.

The Benefits of Diversity

Variations in forms of family are not new to the American scene. Indeed, the strength of the American family rests with its diversity and ability to accommodate change that has been characteristic since the arrival of the first colonists. As in the past, the five alternative family forms presented here also are evolving in response

to our increasingly complex and rapidly changing society--a society that places greater and greater demands on the individual. Because of their interactive nature, these five variations provide each family member with special communication and socialization skills beyond the scope of the traditional nuclear family. Finally, each of them encompasses a unique learning environment in which we as individuals operating within the family milieu are able to nurture and cultivate our sense of personal worth, our sensitivity to others, and our means of expressing ourselves to our associates, whoever they may be.

III

The Family Life Cycle

It has already been pointed out that our role in the family structure is constantly changing in its developmental sequence over the life span. The complexity of our role as a family member is revealed in the roles we fill in that capacity, which include being a son or daughter, brother or sister, grandchild, spouse, parent, and grandparent, frequently simultaneously. In addition, each role entails a unique set of expectations that demand a special performance. So that we might get a clearer sense of the evolution of the family, an analysis of the family life cycle has been undertaken. In that regard, the family life cycle encompasses that family into which we are born, the family which we create with our own offspring, and the family in which we have no-kin relationships. Because it is the most commonly referred to model of the American family, this interpretation focuses on the progression of the traditional nuclear family in contemporary society.

The Developmental Sequence

Each family member proceeds through the family life cycle in his or her own, particular way, that begins with birth. Using the family member as a reference point, the family life cycle can be divided into four sequential phases based upon chronological age, in keeping with human development over the life span. Figure 1 identifies the phases, the chronological age each encompasses, and the duration in years of each.

Figure 1

Phases of the Family Life Cycle

Prep Phase	Birth to 15-20 years	(15-20 yrs.)
Initial Phase	15-20 to 25-35 years	(5-15 yrs.)
Peak Phase	25-30 to 45-50 years	(15-25 yrs.)
Mature Phase	45-50 to 70+ years	(25+ yrs)

Prep Phase

Our participation as a family member in the roles of sibling, and offspring, dominates the *prep phase* of the family life cycle which encompasses the period from birth to 15 or 20 years of age. It is within this environment, the one into which we are born, that the various family roles and member functions are identified and observed. Consideration of establishing our own family is not yet contemplated in this phase. Although, practicing the roles of parent or mate through imitation takes place in play activities.

Initial Phase

It is during the *initial phase* from 15 or 20 years of age to 25 or 30 years, that we give serious thought to establishing our own family. An obvious change occurs in our family orientation when the domination of our first family experience is greatly reduced as we seek to establish our own family unit independent from the family into which we were born. The family we create with our own offspring begins with mate selection through dating, courtship, and perhaps living together. Near the conclusion of this second phase of the family life cycle, efforts to begin our own family have been initiated as marriage and childbearing occurs. Regardless of family form, once we have children, childrearing becomes an increasingly dominant activity.

Peak Phase

The *peak phase* of the family life cycle, from 25 or 30 years of age to 45 or 50 years, is the full family period when all children have been born and most are in school. This is also a time during which we, as individuals in middle adulthood, become increasingly introspective and involved in self-assessment; and reflect on where we are versus where we want to be. Also, we are most likely to divorce during this phase, which promotes the emergence of alternative forms of family as we either remain unmarried or remarry. For the unmarried person, including the single-parent, the non-kin family becomes increasingly important.

Mature Phase

In the *mature phase,* from 45 or 50 years of age onward, the family is reduced in size as children are grown and begin to establish their own families. For us, in our role as parent, independence from many past family responsibilities results. Long established family roles change significantly as we become grandparents, and our immediate family once again consists of two people--husband and wife. The death of our mate also demands readjustment to a life in which we, as a widow or widower learn to function as a single person. A critical dimension of this phase is adjusting to the use of new free time and a new way of life resulting from the changing family structure. It is also during this phase that grown children assume increasing responsibility in caring for their aged parents.

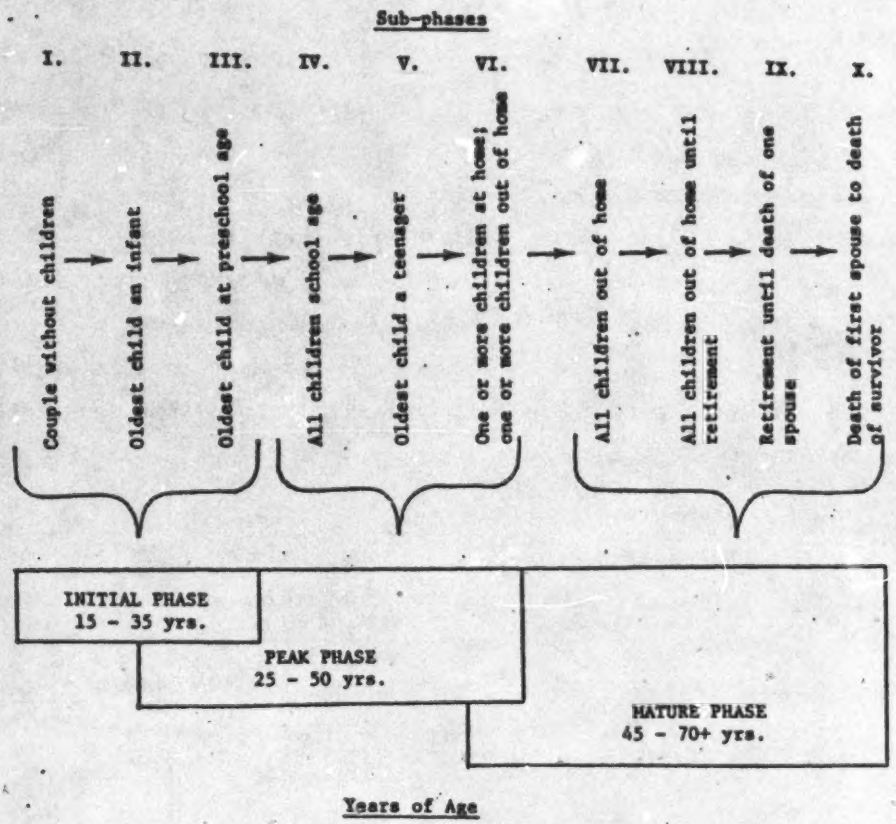
The Traditional Nuclear Family

A further refinement of the family life cycle is illustrated in Figure 2 which has subdivided the progression of the traditional nuclear family into ten sub-phases. By relating those phases to the family member's developmental sequence and grouping them according to the choronology of the four phases previously discussed, we get an even more specific breakdown of what major life events occur within each cluster that contribute to changing the structure of the family and to changing role expectations.

The life cycle of the traditional nuclear family is initiated during the *initial phase* beginning with courtship and marriage, proceeding to the birth of the first child to his or her entry into preschool. During the *peak phase* the family life cycle focuses on childbearing beginning with all children having entered school, to the eldest child becoming an adolescent, through starting to leave home for college or to establish their own household. In the *mature phase* of the family life cycle, the emphasis is on the family's return to a household consisting of two married adults beginning with children no longer residing at home, continuing through retirement then widowhood to death. With its focus on the actual formation of the family, the family life cycle does not address the *prep phase.*

Figure 2

The Life Cycle of the Traditional Nuclear Family



Relationship to Learning

An understanding of the family life cycle does not mean merely the acknowledgement of a sequential phasing over the life span. More importantly, it encompasses the application of the cycle to the teaching-learning process within the context of the family and to each family member as educator-learner. In examining the family life cycle, a number of factors emerge which begin to provide new insights into how the family is truly an educating institution that draws upon and cultivates our individual learning capacities throughout our lifetime.

This analysis has revealed that the family structure follows a developmental sequence that entails tremendous variation. It is a structure that is characterized by major change and accommodation to that change by its membership. Within the context of the family life cycle and its relationship to learning, we can begin to identify critical life events that are instrumental in contributing to structural change in the family; to recognize how family role expectations change; and to acknowledge the inevitability of adjusting to both structure and role changes in the family and the alternative means for doing so.

IV

The Family As Educator

Our limited knowledge of how the family functions as an educator is evident in the plethora of programs and literature that consistently view this operation in terms of parents as teachers--the only teachers in the family milieu, and as aides to the formal education of their children. This perspective has been emphasized over and over again by the formal educating institutions, namely schools and churches; by goverment sponsored programs at federal, state and local levels; and by parents themselves. Totally ignored has been any effort to find out how the family educates, let alone who, in fact, does the educating. Even more fundamental may be discovering for what the family educates best. To date, efforts have concentrated on formal education practices, and have barely touched upon the informal. No attempt has been made to interpret the magnitude of the family's role in affective learning, that learning crucial to the development of the *real basics* of attitudes, values, beliefs, and feelings that are expressed through behavior.

With interest in the family mounting in an unprecedented manner, some new insights and understandings of the family as our primary educator and how it functions as such is desperately needed. Before we proceed in addressing that need, five characteristics of the family should be acknowledged.

First of all, learning is a constant dynamic of the family, regardless of the family's structure.

Second, each of us as a family member functions as both educator and learner, no matter what family role changes we undergo throughout our life time.

Third, the family's learning milieu conditions each family member's responsiveness to formal learning that occurs both inside and outside of the home.

Fourth, affective learning is a natural phenomena of the family, and supercedes both intentional informal learning and formal learning, occurring within or without the family environment.

Finally fifth, no matter what its form or how it operates, the family is our basic and most influential learning institution. Given those considerations, we will examine further how the family cultivates our learning capacities, as well as how it contributes to our individual functioning as both learner and educator.

Three Perspectives

One of the more explicit efforts undertaken addressing the educational functioning of the family is that of Hope Jensen Leichter, Director of the Elbenwood Center for the Study of the Family as Educator at Teachers College, Columbia University, in her work, The Family as Educator.[14] She reviews the vast research that has been conducted related to the family as educator, the educative process or processes it uses, and points out to what extent is has been grossly ignored. Furthermore, virtually all the research reviewed places emphasis on the cognitive aspects of familial education; none on its affective dimension. It is her contention that there is a critical need to more fully understand the processes of education within the family, and a critical need to view those processes in the context of multiple and ever-changing relationships within the family. She goes on to identify five interactive processes of the family's educating function that need exploration. They are: (1) language interaction within the family, (2) the organization of activity in space and time, (3) memory, (4) evaluating and labeling, and (5) educational mediation. According to Leichter, the concepts of socialization, enculturation, and development offer potential for examining the ever-changing educational encounters between individuals and their family environments.

Earl Schaefer, noted developmental psychologist, also recognizes the family as our major educational institution.[15] He sees children, as well as parents, as teachers and urges that we motivate and train children to teach one another. By teaching them the skills and attitudes they will need as future parents, he asserts that they may then become parents who have the necessary motivation and skills to educate their

children. He views education in its variant forms of teaching and learning as a major component of our entire life experience. Schaefer also stresses training for family living and of strengthening and supporting families. He believes it is crucial to prepare children for their future roles as mothers and fathers; husbands and wives. According to Schaefer, a dichotomy exists in expecting parents to be generalists with skills in health, nutrition, child care, education, recreation, and specialists in the entire range of skills required to rear a child and raise a family. His perspective focuses upon the development and utilization of the education institution of the family as a valuable resource that could greatly benefit formal education and social service institutions.

In his article, "The Family: A School for Living," educational researcher, James Garbarino presents a child-oriented view based on how the interdependence of families, regardless of their structure, affects our personal education.[16] His concern is with the ecology of the family, that is, the way the family as a social system is grounded in a network of institutions and values that shape the conditions in which we develop. Garbarino points out that American families act as educators through two processes. The first process is modeling, which involves observing behavior and then copying it. The second process is interaction style in which families either initiate and maintain effective relationships or fail to do so. He goes on to identify two factors that influence the successful functioning of these two processes. They are (1) the degree to which families model socially representative and valued patterns of behavior in their lasting relationships, and (2) the competence and mental health of the family members, themselves.

These three perspectives provide a beginning foundation to understanding how the family serves as our primary educating institution. Each highlights the power of the family in influencing the development of its members. In addition, each acknowledges the family's unique capacity to adapt to change, particularly in its ability to create constructive and healthy responses to adversely stressful living environments.

Clues to Curriculum

Some thoughts on the natural compostition and content of curriculum within the family learning institution is provided by Jane Howard in her widely acclaimed work, Families.[17] She identifies ten traits held in common by what she classifies as "good families." They include:

1. having someone around whom the other family members cluster and who inspires them, and who is a success;
2. having someone who keeps track of the family membership;
3. being busy--active and involved in many outside pursuits as well as each other;
4. being hospitable, warmly welcoming other family and friends and lending help and support when needy;
5. handling oppressiveness directly, including individual family member shortcomings;
6. treasuring their rituals;
7. being affectionate and comforting;
8. having a sense of place, of "home";
9. relating to ancestry and culture, both past and future beyond blood kin; and
10. honoring their elders.

Earl Schaefer also provides some clues as to what family members are most likely to teach and learn within the educating institution of the family.[18] He concentrates on family interaction between parents and children, and like Jane Howard, also identifies ten characteristics which he feels are especially important to the education process of the family. They are

1. Priority--The family influences the early development of relationships, interests, and language.
2. Duration--The family maintains contact with the child from birth to maturity.
3. Continuity--Prolonged separations of parents and children are rare.

4. Amount--The total amount of interaction of children with parents tends to be greater than with any other adults.

5. Extensity--Parents and children interact in many different situations and share many different experiences.

6. Intensity--The degree of involvement of the child with the parent tends to be more intense than with other adults.

7. Pervasiveness--The parent influences the child's contact with other persons and institutions, and controls the child's access to society and society's access to the child.

8. Consistency--The parent's behavior with the child tends to be consistent over time.

9. Responsibility--Both parents and society recognize the parent's primary responsibility for the child's welfare and development.

10. Variability--The extreme variability of family care and education from extremes of acceptance, involvement, and stimulation to extremes of neglect, abuse, and physical deprivation, is related to variability in child development.

In the quality characteristics of families they present, both Howard and Schaefer reveal the prominence of the affective dimension of learning in the family's teaching-learning milieu. Furthermore, both highlight the *real basics* of attitudes, values, and beliefs that are expressed through behavior, as the core of the family's natural curriculum.

Making the Grade

Knowledge on the family as educator is limited. To date, a complete interpretation of how the family might function as an educating institution does not exist, even though its influence in molding the individual (especially the child) is emphasized repeatedly by educators and psychologists. Thus far, our progress in addressing the learning-teaching aspects of the family, particularly in terms of the affective, has been extraordinarily limited, in spite of the impetus provided by the 1980 White House Conference on Families.

V

The Family Academy

With all the commotion we are experiencing today concerning the dire straits of the American family, it comes as no surprise that we have not adequately acknowledged the strengths and the qualities that these families of ours possess. During the decades of the sixties and seventies, we were exposed to a plethora of programs pertaining to parenting, parent education, and parent involvement provided through our social service and formal education institutions. Unfortunately, these very same institutions can be credited for being major contributors to undermining confidence in today's families, because of their refusal to recognize the family as a primary resource, particularly in its role as educator. As our most vital and enduring social institution, it is time for the family, regardless of its form or function, to be properly credited for what it contributes to our learning, and be utilized accordingly. Within this context, the family academy concept becomes pertinent. By providing an interpretation of how the family functions as our primary educating institution, the family academy reveals the tremendous educating capacity contained within the family framework itself.

The core of the family academy is the individual family. It encompasses all family members, and addresses the roles played by each member within and without the immediate family environment. In this context, each member, at various points in time, functions as both learner and educator throughout the life span. From the time of birth and until death, every one of us is a member of a family academy, even though its configuration continues to change. The family configuration provides the basic environment in which the family academy operates. Within this environment, learning occurs that concentrates on individuality, interpersonal communication, and the socialization process. In the family academy, learning addresses the life roles we play, the feelings we have, the values we assume, the beliefs we

espouse, and the behaviors we use to express them. While some informal and formal learning that focuses on cognitive learning takes place, affective learning dominates the family academy. Learning activities concentrate on three approaches--observation, imitation, and experience--with experience being the most critical. Life span learning is an intrinsic characteristic of the family academy.

Every family is a family academy. Its environment encompasses the conditions, including the social and cultural circumstances, that directly influence the family structure and its specific, individual membership. Whether the family is single-parent, reconstituted, no-kin, multigenerational, or traditional nuclear, the environment in which the family academy operates is a major determinant influencing our learning capacities and functioning. The family academy is most responsible for cultivating the *real basics*.

Unique to the family academy is its emphasis on intuitive and reflective learning, its four primary tasks which focus upon the development of the *real basics*, and its five-step learning sequence that concentrates upon cultivating our judgements and perceptions as they relate to adapting to life experiences. While observation and imitation can be classified as pseudo-intrinsic learning approaches used by the family academy, the experience approach is the essence of affective learning. The family academy interpretation of the educative process of the family verifies how little we know about human learning, and even less about how the family operates in a learning context.

A Life Span Learning Curriculum

Life span learning in the family academy encompasses our personal response and adaptation to evolving life experiences. It involves four primary tasks that serve to develop every family member's awareness and understanding, coping capacity, and ability to adapt to change. Unstructured, the life span learning curriculum is geared to present strategies in response to the constantly occurring life events and subsequent periods of adjustment experienced by individual family members. The four primary learning tasks in the life span

learning curriculum of the family academy are (1) role selection, (2) personality acquisition, (3) value formation, and (4) behavioral patterning. *Role selection* refers to identifying the preparation for and performance of the various and numerous life roles filled by each of us as a family member throughout our life span. *Personality acquisition* involves recognizing and expressing personal feelings concerning our self and our relationships to others. *Value formation* encompasses realizing and adhering to the values and beliefs endorsed by our family academy membership. And *behavioral patterning* involves acknowledging and implementing our individual behaviors conditioned by our interaction with the environment of the family academy.

The mission of the family academy is to nurture and cultivate the individuality, communication and socialization of each family member through the learning process.

The Primary Learning Tasks

The primary function of the family academy is the education of its members, involving four major tasks that serve to develop each family member's human understanding and insight, coping capacity, and ability to change. The primary tasks provide the critical subject matter learned and taught within the family academy. They possess unique applicability to personality development.

1. The first task is *Role Selection.* This task involves identifying, preparing for, and performing the various and numerous life roles each of us assumes as a family member throughout our life span. All of us act out a variety of roles that demand unique sets of expectations, responsibilities, and skills. At any given time, we must be prepared to perform simultaneously in any number of roles. The family academy prepares us for the role functions we will encounter throughout our life time. Preconceived notions of how each role is to be satisfied are evident within the family membership, both in the form of role models and didactic instruction. The family academy further reinforces this instruction by providing (1) recognition of given role expectations, (2) observation of others in the various roles, and (3) motivation to func-

tion in a prescribed and accepted mode. Feedback is a constant dynamic of the family academy with most family members assessing the appropriateness of their own role performance, as well as the performances of other members, and responding to them accordingly.

2. The second task is *Personality Acquisition*. This task encompasses recognizing and expressing personal feelings and attitudes about our self and our relationships to others. We all experience innumerable life events which promote a broad range of emotions in response to them. Those responses require us to make adjustments in how we express the attitudes and feelings that have been triggered. Through the family academy, a determination is made by its membership concerning the appropriateness of the response. *Personality Acquisition* involves making note of how emotions are expressed, what the reaction to those expressions are, and then deciding which ones are most in keeping with our sense of self and how we believe others perceive us.

Each of us as a family member is an educator in the family academy, because we provide unique examples of feelings and attitudes through related expressive behaviors. With this data base, the learner in the family academy has an entire repertoire of expressions to use. Depending upon the family environment, the available examples may be either accepted or rejected. If a selection is made from those available, it is likely to be an emulation with modification of those feelings and attitudes to which we have been most frequently exposed or those we deem most appropriate.

3. *Value Formation* is the third task. This task entails acknowledging and following the values and beliefs endorsed and adhered to by our family. Every family has a special system of values and beliefs that provides us with the basic criteria for deciding good from bad, right from wrong, and truth from untruth. Within our family, each of us is expected to abide by this system of assumed rules and regulations. In the operation of the family academy, the interpretation and rationale of its value and belief system are provi-

ded by the membership, which also functions as both judge and jury to any family member who does not comply. *Value Formation* takes into account recognizing the system, and accepting, rejecting, or modifying it as we accommodate our changing life circumstances.

Because of their abstract nature, the emphasis given certain values and beliefs by our family members is crucial to how we incorporate them into our sense of self. Maintaining compliance to the espoused values and beliefs is a major function of the family academy. In that regard, it becomes the responsibility of the family academy to employ a means by which family members are aware of the impact of deviation from espoused values and beliefs. In an effort to renew the commitment of a family member who disavows them, the family academy serves a judiciary function in that family members establish criteria by which a wayward family member may exonerate him or herself.

4. Finally, the fourth task of the family academy is *Behavioral Patterning*. This task includes discovering, choosing, and practicing personal behaviors through our interaction with the people we encounter in the family environment. Determining the appropriateness or inappropriateness of how we act is a dominant and fundamental aspect of the family. Many of the patterns of behavior that we see, imitate, and ultimately use are those initially presented to us by our fellow family members. Based upon the individual actions and reactions of each of its members to given circumstances and emotions, the family academy is a learning laboratory that provides us with a number of models for molding our behavior. *Behavioral Patterning* encompasses noticing how others act, being cognizant of the kind of response there is to the act, and then determining whether or not it is suitable for ourselves.

Toward a New Interpretation

The family academy serves to mold our behavior to accommodate society as interpreted through the family. This entails observing the behaviors of our family members, emulating the observed behaviors,

and testing them for personal fit, as well as for acceptance and approval by the family membership specifically, and society, generally. A crucial function of the family academy as it molds our behavior within the family milieu is assisting family members in determining the spectrum of allowable behaviors, with variation, and reinforcing those that work best for us, personally.

VI

The Learning Sequence

The family academy serves to improve our sense of self and our demeanor--primarily in the affective, but also in the cognitive--as individuals within and without our immediate family environment. As family members, we are continuously experiencing and living through the dynamics of the four primary learning tasks of the family academy which focus on the *real basics*.

A Personal Management System

In a sense, the family academy represents a personal management system that operates on an experientially-based learning mode to improve our functioning as an individual both inside and outside of the family environment. In this learning mode, we rely upon a sequence of five steps that address the tasks of the family academy. Each step relates to how we define, cultivate, and orchestrate through our behavior, our roles, attitudes, feelings, values, and beliefs. These steps are (1) identification, (2) selection, (3) performance, (4) modification and (5) adoption. The sequential process involves the following:

The first step of *identification*, involves observing how each of our family members acts and reacts in general, as well as to specific circumstances. It concentrates on recognizing and distinguishing between the roles, feelings, attitudes, values, beliefs, and behaviors that we have been exposed to within the family academy.

The second step of *selection*, entails choosing what each of us perceives as being appropriate and compatible with our personal sense of self. Through this step, we make a choice from our repertoire of responses available to us through the family academy.

The third step of *performance*, encompasses acting out our selections to determine those that fit and to discard those that do not. Its emphasis is on the responses we have selected within the family academy to determine those that are in keeping with our sense of self, and eliminating those that are incompatible with our personal system.

The fourth step of *modification*, concentrates on our practicing our chosen performances and making adjustments to accommodate our highly individual functioning. Within the family academy, the performances we have opted to retain, and the changes we make in them in order to complement how we perceive ourselves, and how we believe others perceive us is the focus of this step.

Finally, the fifth step of *adoption*, involves acknowledging the completion of this learning process in the family academy as the new and modified action becomes a part of our total self. At this juncture, we have incorporated a new response option into our repertoire of responses to life experiences, thereby further expanding our personal management system.

This process applies to every life event we experience, whether or not it is major or minor, traumatic or non-traumatic. In turn, each life event addresses at least one of the four primary tasks of the family academy. A life event is an episode we experience. As adult family members, such episodes include a surprise birthday celebration, remarriage, a prolonged illness, becoming a grandparent, our child's graduation, re-entering school, purchasing a home, and the like. Life events are the learning lessons of living that we undergo throughout the life span, many occurring within the milieu of the family academy.

We can explore how the family academy operates by interpreting four different major life events--the birth of a first child, the death of a loved one, divorce, and retirement--within the context of the family academy's four tasks and its five-step learning sequence.

Birth of the first child. The family academy task of *role selection* will be examined through the beautiful life event of the birth of the first child. The most influential input by the family academy membership for this major life event is typically provided by the parents of the parents-to-be. However, friends, neighbors, and brothers and sisters also provide parent models of child rearing.

The years of exposure to various parent role models and their evolution into maturity is the most important input to developing the role, rather than the nine month gestation-parent preparation period. It is within the context of the five-step learning sequence that we develop the following family life skills pertinent to the occurrence and outcomes of this life event.

.The first life skill we develop is the *identification* of the various parental responsibilities and role-related behaviors appropriate to the new life-changing circumstances.

.The second life skill involves the *selection* of new parent behaviors that also include accommodating and modifying existing roles.

.The third life skill addresses *performance* in the new role of parent and entails examining suitable behaviors based on the perceptions and interpretations of others who have also experienced this life event.

.The fourth life skill of *modification* encompasses (1) acknowledging expectations involved with performing in the new role of parent; (2) concentrating on parent role performances that are complimentary to the character of the newly emerging family; and (3) accepting and continually refining the evolving parent role.

.Finally, the fifth life skill, the *adoption* of the parent role involves making judgements that establish the design and continuity of the parent role over time through trial and error experience, and through feedback and consultation with members of the family academy and others.

Death of a Loved One. How the family academy task of *personality acquisition* is cultivated will be examined through the life event of the death of a loved one. Because of its seemingly adverse nature and our psycho-social reluctance to prepare for it, and since only when it is precipitated by illness is there preparation time, the death of a loved one is indeed a complicated occurrence. Only

when death is seen as inevitable or occurs unexpectedly does the family member begin to accommodate this reality. The family life skills that we develop in response to this traumatic life event, incorporating the five-step sequence, follow.

.The first life skill we address is the *identification* of the individual's true and specific feelings concerning this episode, especially since the bereaved one is frequently confused by the intense feelings exhibited at both overt and covert levels of other mourning family members.

.The second life skill involves the conscious and subconscious *selection* of feelings that serve to perpetuate a, hopefully desired, new way of life which is tempered by the personal sense of loss and the realization of dramatic adjustments to how life will continue.

.The third life skill concentrates on *performance* chat manifests a way of life that may capitalize on or be characterized by either unconsolable grief, fear of living, or a newly found mellowness and resolve about the future.

.The fourth life skill entails *modification* of the new way of life that is accompanied by a retrenchment of emotions based on past reminiscences and future anticipation of the unknown.

.Finally, the fifth life skill of *adoption* of the new life style takes place and involves the sensitizing which contributes to a peaking in certain emotions, and a numbing of others.

Divorce. In terms of the family academy task of *value formation,* perhaps no life event challenges personal values more than the life event of divorce. Once divorce appears to be inevitable, a preparation period for the changed way of life is provided that encompasses the waning marriage time and the period of formal separation. Through this process, a new life style is determined and established. Once again applying the five-step learning process of the family academy, the major family life skills involved in doing so are presented.

.The first life skill of *identification* involves re-evaluating values based on the past family, children, and social milieu, as well as re-assessing the spiritual foundation involved with re-ordering values, especially those that are in conflict with those cultivated by the former marriage.

.The second life skill involves *selection* in accommodating different living arrangements by making necessary adjustments, and rearranging past patterns accordingly.

.The third life skill encompasses *performance* of the newly defined values that have been tried in order to re-assess and re-establish a personal sense of values.

.The fourth life skill entails *modification* of the new living arrangements and past patterns to facilitate a wholesome fit and appropriate clarification.

.The fifth and final life skill of *adoption* involves integrating the tested and modified values into day-to-day life as an unmarried person with altered perceptions, responsibilities, behaviors, and personal goals.

It should be pointed out that with its new and re-arranged family membership, divorce contributes to the formation of a new family academy, based on the newly single adult, with or without children.

Retirement. Through the life event of retirement, the family academy task of *behavioral patterning* will now be examined. Even through the concept of retirement is contemplated for some time prior to its actual occurrence, the real preparation period for most people is nominal at best. Although major alterations in one's social and economic status ensue, the realization of retirement's total range of implications is generally not acknowledged by the person until it is an accomplished fact. By applying the five-step learning sequence of the family academy, family life skills pertinent to *behavioral patterning* in the life event of retirement follow.

.The first life skill of *identification* concentrates on determining and cultivating new behaviors relative to unallocated time, the reduction of worklife, and the new emphasis on family and leisure life.

.The second life skill involves *selection* that zeroes in on how to adjust established living patterns, to the now more abundant discretionary time, reduced income, a closing circle of friends, and an altered family structure.

.The third life skill focuses on *performance* that concentrates on using time differently by incorporating new behaviors and changing old ones to better serve the newly attained pattern of living.

.The fourth life skill entails the *modification* of behaviors through evolving relationships with family members and the incremental establishment of a social environment conducive to the retirement life-style.

.Finally, as the fifth life skill of *adoption* is facilitated, behaviors reflect revised perceptions of personal worth, new dependencies and independencies, and changed role functions in the redefined family structure and personal life pattern.

Taking an Inventory

Each step of the learning sequence provides the basis for the learning-teaching activities of the family academy. What we experience within the parameters of a given life event is incorporated into the natural curriculum of the family academy. The curricula of the academy are tailor-made to accommodate the unique teaching-learning dimensions of each family member.

In order to apply the learning concepts of the family academy, an inventory, presented on the succeeding two pages, has been designed so that the reader is able to conduct a self-assessment of a life event he or she has experienced as part of the family academy to discover what life skills have in fact been developed or could have

been developed. This inventory process can provide additional insights to stimulate new action and change attitudes and behaviors. It should help to

1. develop an awareness of what we are prone to notice and prone to overlook;

2. discover the range of options in actions and reactions that we have at our disposal;

3. find out what we do best and what we prefer doing, as well as what we discard without trying;

4. acknowledge how we modify actions to blend into our image of ourself; and

5. integrate new learning with comfort and ease into our total demeanor.

FAMILY LIFE SKILLS INVENTORY

Instructions

1. Select a critical life event that you have experienced sometime durirg the past twelve months.
2. Designate family roles played.
3. Identify which primary learning tasks were involved.
4. Using the five-step learning sequence, plot out the progression of each task as it relates to the life event.
5. Describe the life skills you used and developed.

Family Academy Functions

Primary Learning Tasks (Knowledge Areas)

1. Role Selection--identifying, preparing for, and performing the various life roles I fill as a family member throughout my life time.
2. Personality Acquisition--recognizing and expressing personal feelings and attitudes concerning myself and my relationships with others.
3. Value Formation--realizing and adhering to the values and beliefs endorsed by the members of my family.
4. Behavioral Patterning--acknowledging and implementing my individual behaviors that have been conditioned by interaction with others the environment of my family academy.

Five-Step Learning Sequence (Life Skills/Competencies)

Step 1: Identification--observing how each of my family members acts and reacts, in general, as well as to specific episodes.

Step 2: Selection--choosing those actions that I perceive as being appropriate and compatible to my personal sense of self.

Step 3: Performance--acting out my selections to determine those that fit, and discarding those that do not.

Step 4: Modification--practicing my chosen performances and making adjustments to accommodate my unique functioning.

Step 5: Adoption--acknowledging that I have completed this learning process, as new and modified action becomes an integral part of me.

FAMILY LIFE SKILLS INVENTORY

Life event: _____

Family member role: _____

Primary Tasks	The Learning Process				
	Step 1 Identification	Step 2 Selection	Step 3 Performance	Step 4 Modification	Step 5 Adoption
Role Selection					
Personality Acquisition					
Value Formation					
Behavioral Patterning					

Life Skills/Competencies:

Developed by: W. Warnat

VII

The Future of the Family

The family, which stands at the center of an ever-extending network of human relationships, also stands at the center of the life span learning process. The principal context of this life span learning process is the family academy--that is, the family as it interacts physically and emotionally with the immediate community and the larger world. In its day-to-day interpretations of its environment, and rationalizations of its collective mutual behaviors, the family academy provides both content and context for most of the affective learning of its members. Through the mechanisms of mutual, interactive role-modeling, involving the unique dynamics of each person who contributes to its life span learning curriculum, the family academy provides each member with the skills to manage the affective dimensions of his or her life--*a personal life management system.* This life management system includes our basic understanding of how and why society and its institutions behave the way they do. It includes our comprehension of human nature, our sensitivity to individual differences among people, and our need to accommodate others in order to function effectively in our various life roles, e.g., worker, parent, consumer, spouse, supervisor, etcetera. Finally, the family academy helps its members to establish sound behavior patterns and communications skills to further promote effective interpersonal relations.

The family academy concept represents one of a number of ways in which to functionally define the family. It is not a new perception, although as presented in the preceeding pages, the family academy concept represents a more comprehensive development of the perception than has been previously advanced. Clearly, we have long understood and accepted the fact that human development is, first and foremost, dependent upon our experience in the family environment. By logical extension, the family, operating as a family academy, remains a significant force for shaping the individual throughout his or her

life span, and this is likely to be so regardless of the family's structure or mode of operation.

To determine what implications families as family academies have for future policy, practice, and research we need to have some sense of where we are today. There currently exists a flurry of interest and activity regarding the American family, which has been particularly active during the decade of the seventies. However recognizing the importance of the family as an avowed educational institution has been, at best, negligible. We still interpret the family's educational functioning primarily on the basis of cognitive learning, the socialization of children, and parents as educators. This has been largely due to our being so strongly influenced by our formal educating institutions. When the question is raised of how the family functions as educator, the immediate reactions triggered are reflected in the terms "parenting," "parent education," and "parent involvement," with an occasional consideration given to "family life education." In any other aspect, the family is virtually ignored as the valuable, multifaceted resource it should be credited for being by our formal social institutions, especially that of education. Nonetheless, the family will remain our strongest social institution as it successfully continues to adapt to the social, economic, political, educational, and technological changes and traumas of our society. Indeed, the power of the family is beginning to surface.

The Problem of Policy

In their significant work, Family Policy: Government and Families in Fourteen Countries, Sheila B. Kamerman and Alfred J. Kahn revealed to what extent the United States lags in helping its families.[19] Their study showed: (1) All but the United States offers family allowances to supplement parental earnings when they have children. (2) All but the United States have maternity benefits and leaves of fourteen weeks to nine months (and in Sweden, father, too) providing the opportunity for parents to develop strong relation-

ships with their infants before returning to work. (3) All but the United States have special housing allowances or priorities for families with children. The United States is unique in only one aspect of government help--the Aid to Families with Dependent Children welfare program supports mothers with no income who remain at home to care for their children.

The most comprehensive effort at analyzing federal legislation as it relates to family policy here in the United States is that being conducted by the Family Impact Seminar of the Institute for Educational Leadership at George Washington University in Washington, D. C.[20] Through its delvings, it has discovered 268 federal programs that have potential for direct impact on families. One hundred and nineteen of those programs emanated from the former U.S. Department of Health Education, and Welfare, (HEW) and concentrate on poor families. One hundred and forty nine programs related to families are administered outside of HEW (now the Departments of Health and Human Services and of Education) and also tend to concentrate on poor families, but are not limited exclusively to them. Some of the other departments involved with such programs include Housing and Urban Development, Labor, Interior, Justice, Treasury, and Transportation. The work of the Family Impact Seminar provides evidence that the family is viewed in the political arena from a distorted, socio-economic perspective, revealed by the federal legislation and programs endorsed and implemented that consistently concentrate on poor and problem families. At best, there are only cursory and occasional efforts being made to establish any kind of healthy and constructive policy to benefit all

Mary Jo Bane, Harvard Professor and author of Here to Stay, accurately analyzes the unlikelihood of the United States to develop an explicit family policy.[21] She points out that mere mention of families in our political arena generates heated controversy. She states, "Far from being an attractive slogan..."Family Policy" has become a red flag."[22] As a result, until there is some sort of consensus on its merits, it is highly improbable that we as a nation

will be able to rally around a family policy that addresses all American families. Regardless of whether or not we adopt a formal family policy however, the family remains at the core of our social policy.

In a nation where research suggests that 15-25 percent of the adult population is estimated to be functionally incompetent to cope with commonplace, everyday tasks, it would appear to be folly for public education to continue ignoring the family academy.[23] Public policy must come to view families, whatever their configurations, as educational institutions which contribute uniquely and significantly to individual learning and development. Specifically, this means that a national education policy on the family could be developed which builds upon the strengths inherent in the family in all its variations throughout the life span, and which supports rather than supplants family functions. Under such a policy, the formal education institutions at all levels should collaborate with families on a collegial basis in cultivating both the cognitive and affective learning capacities and performances of family members throughout their lives. Through the specific programs of this educational policy, families should be provided with the resources and the opportunities to maximize their capabilities for supporting the performance of their members as contributors to the larger community. The ultimate goal of such a policy would be to assure the role of the family academy as an effective, independent social organization for stimulating and facilitating appropriate social change within the context of a stronger, more broadly defined family institution, especially as we proceed into the twenty-first century.

The Reality of Practice

The family academy interpretation of the learning process of individual families begins to reveal how much there is to discover about the daily learning experiences, adventures, episodes, emotive changes we undergo in profusion as family members. Educators have

not yet adequately acknowledged the marvels of the educating institution of the family. Rather than recognize and utilize the learning resources and processes that the family provides, formal education, instead, has chosen a prescriptive approach to the changing family based on the underlying inference that the family not only needs help in educating its members, but that it cannot function effectively without such assistance. Fortunately, the family academy concept acknowledges the nature of the family as a dynamic learning-teaching enterprise that educators cannot long ignore.

The Family Academy and Competency-Based Education. To get an understanding of how the family academy concept can be applied to existing practice, a comparision of the concept to Competency-Based Education (CBE) is warranted. In examining the family academy and how we, as members, operate as self-directed learners, some clear analogies to CBE can be made. By using the six elements of competency-based education identified by William Spady, a comparision can be made between them and the five processes of the household school.[24] The six CBE elements he identifies are: (1) competencies or outcomes, (2) time, (3) instruction, (4) measurement, (5) certification, and (6) program adaptability.

Competencies or Outcomes. Using competencies as the indicators of successful performance of life role activities, the family academy identifies four knowledge areas--role selection, personality acquisition, value formation, and behavioral patterning. The functional competencies needed to develop competence in those four areas are reflected in the five family academy processes of identification, selection, performance, modification, and adoption.

Time. There are no rigid time constraints in the family academy. However through the sequence of the family life cycle, there is a natural evolution in developing competencies needed by family members to adapt to changes occurring in the family academy's four knowledge areas over the life span.

Instruction. Since instruction in the family academy is self-directed, its educators (family members) operate primarily as guides and role models. They are instrumental in providing incentives, many of which are emotive in nature, for adopting certain responses and discouraging or discarding others. For the most part the form of instruction is determined by the learner herself or himself. In fact, the instruction consists of learner observation, imitation, and experience. Unlike CBE , it covers a range of activities and experiences which are not prescribed.

Measurement. In the context of the family academy, measurement of performance is much more subtle in nature. The major evaluative means used are explicit. They concentrate on feedback procedures followed by the family academy's membership, and its established parameters of expressed performance. No record keeping, other than recall, is involved.

Certification. The adoption process of the learning sequence in the family academy represents successful accomplishment of a task, which, in effect, certifies the learner in at least one aspect of one of the four knowledge areas.

Program Adaptability. The very nature of the family academy reveals its programmatic adaptability for addressing the unique education needs of its self-directed learner population. Collecting and storing data on member performance is a constant effort. Unique to the family academy is each self-directed learner's contribution as an educator also. How every family member functions as learner and educator reflects the success of the family academy as our primary educating institution responsible for affective learning through its four knowledge areas that highlight the *real basics*.

Relevance to Parenting. To incorporate the family academy concept into current and future education practices, a logical starting point is in the area of parenting. Therefore, the following suggestions are provided parent educators as they develop and implement

their parent education programs.

First of all, the importance of the family as our primary educating institution needs to be recognized and used as the basis for curriculum development and programming. No longer can the affective dimension of learning be ignored simply because this dimension is too difficult to approach and too difficult to assess. The education institution of the family provides each of us with a living learning-laboratory from which we can expand our entire repertorire of learning experiences and responses.

Secondly, the fact that every parent is an educator as well as a learner needs to be kept at the forefront of planning efforts. Parents cannot be lumped into a homogeneous group. The uniqueness and diversity of parents as individuals, as members of special family structures and as adult learners needs to be acknowledged. In order to capitalize on that variety, trying to re-mold or re-model these unique family configurations into the traditional nuclear family form or, into another form considered to be more appropriate is an effort in futility and attempting to do so must be avoided.

Third, knowledge of the family life cycle should be used as a tool for adapting to change. Recognizing the importance of changing roles and of role-modeling is vital to effective parenting efforts. Of paramount importance is the need to remain cognizant of the variation in role expectations as the cycle changes. Understanding where parent educators are in their own family life cycle will serve to enhance their sensitivity to family organizations as educating institutions.

Fourth, helpful to parent educators is understanding how the family functions as an educating institution. The family academy concept provides but one interpretation. In that context, they need to continue pursuing the development of learning approaches that focus on the affective domain by emphasizing observation, imitation, and experience. Even parents and grandparents continue to use those three approaches. Although learning in the family academy is

informal, self-directed, and based on individual choice, it still entails a sequential learning process.

Fifth, in applying competency-based education to the family academy the mutual mission of both--the successful functioning in life roles--becomes apparent. In that regard, no approach to parenting can be effectively applied to a given parent population, in toto. Modification is essential. Effective parenting efforts based on the perspectives of competency-based education and the family academy take into account and accommodate individual differences and personal change as it occurs over the life span.

Finally, parent educators are not at the same place as their parent constituencies. However, like them, they continue to experience peaks and valleys in their own functioning within their own family milieu as they respond to the influence of life events and cultivate their ability to react, recover, adjust, and adapt. The development of competence is based on individual perceptions of available alternative responses to life events and the ability to choose the most appropriate one as we proceed to manage our lives effectively in each of the life roles we play. Therefore, there must be an openness and responsiveness to alternative life styles, perceptions of parenthood, and the effects of life experiences on parents' receptivity to parenting efforts.

The Hope of Research

How the strength of the family will be interpreted and used will be determined largely by our research thrusts. Past and current research conducted on the family has, for the most part, ignored delving into the family's educating capacities. The family academy presents a model worthy of further exploration for obtaining new information and insights on the educating role of the family as an institution, on the family member as both teacher and learner, and on the societal implications of those discoveries. In the pursuit of new knowledge and deeper understanding of the family as our primary educating institution, particularly where future policy and practice are concerned, we might consider the following topical agenda for future research.

A RESEARCH AGENDA ON THE FAMILY AS EDUCATOR

Item One: New Research Methodology

Existing methods are inadequate for analyzing how the family operates. New qualitative approaches that penetrate the family learning, process in particular, are needed.

Item Two: Theory Building

We do not know how the family educates. Theoretical models are needed that can form the basis for further research.

Item Three: The Family Life Cycle

Our knowledge of the family process in its variant forms is lacking. Interpretations of both the organizational and individual aspects of development within the family construct are needed.

Item Four: Life Events

How life events serve as learning lessons and as change agents within the family milieu is unknown. We need to explore the impact of life events on changing the family structure and member role expectations.

Item Five: Affective Learning

Even though the socialization aspects of family have been acknowledged, we do not know how the family cultivates attitudes, values, beliefs, and behaviors of its members. Discovering how emotive learning occurs and how it is influenced by the family is needed.

Item Six: The Educator-Learner Dyad

How parents learn from their children and how children teach their parents is not known. The dyadic nature of individual and interactive learning processes is a major dynamic of the family that needs extensive examination.

Item Seven: Life Span Learning

We do not know how a person learns to perform and adjust to the numerous role changes he or she undergoes as a family member. The lifelong learning aspect of family membership and the living-learning laboratory aspect of the family needs in-depth exploration.

Item Eight: The Family Resource

We do not yet understand what the family contributes to other social institutions, education in particular. An analysis of these family characteristics and qualities that provide unique resources and how to use them is badly needed.

Toward the Twenty-First Century

Despite the mood of pessimism that hovers over many of us, a hopeful and optimistic view of the future, that relies on faith in the nature of humankind and in our increasing knowledge and understanding of human potential, can be maintained as we unfold the heretofore unrecognized power and capacity of our families in molding our individual nature. The 1980s as a decade of economic, political, cultural, and personal turmoil will serve to further challenge and stimulate emerging forms of family. By comparison, the 1990s will be a decade of adjustment and accommodation.

No matter what the future holds, the family lives! Given its diversity and expanding parameters, the family will continue to provide the core for personal growth and development throughout the lifetime of its members. The family will remain our primary educating institution and will continue to focus on the *real basics*. Clearly, the family is not in the dire straits that many would have us believe; rather it is changing and evolving into more complex forms in keeping with our increasingly complex society and a shrinking global community. The family academy concept reveals that the family is truly a magnificent life span learning center with lifelong learning as its mission. Within that center, the unique living-learning laboratory that each of us is, is nurtured. As we rapidly approach the twenty-first century, we will make great strides in understanding how the family motivates, cultivates, and educates its members.

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